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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [CA](#)
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT, OPPOSITION NEGOTIATING A WAY AHEAD IN
AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. OTTAWA 107

[1](#)B. 07 OTTAWA 2135
[1](#)C. 07 OTTAWA 2133
[1](#)D. 07 OTTAWA 1903
[1](#)E. 07 OTTAWA 1354

CLASSIFIED BY: POLMINCOUNS SCOTT BELLARD, REASON: 1.4 (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: THE GOVERNING CONSERVATIVES AND THE
OPPOSITION PARTIES APPEAR CLOSER THAN EVER ON A WAY FORWARD
FOR THE AFGHAN MISSION OF THE CANADIAN FORCES, WITH A NEW
LIBERAL AMENDMENT TO THE GOVERNMENT'S MOTION. THERE REMAIN
SOME IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES OVER WHETHER THE TARGET DATE FOR
THE END OF THE MISSION IS FEBRUARY 2011 (AS THE LIBERALS
WANT) OR BY THE END OF 2011 (AS THE CONSERVATIVES PREFER), AS
WELL AS WHETHER CF WILL HAVE EXPLICIT AUTHORIZATION TO ENGAGE
IN COMBAT OR WHETHER THEIR MANDATE IS A MORE NEBULOUS
"SECURITY" FOR RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS AS WELL AS TRAINING.
AN UNUSUALLY CONCILIATORY PM HARPER NONETHELESS PUBLICLY
CALLED THE LIBERAL AMENDMENT A "POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT" THAT
"MOVES THE DEBATE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION" TOWARD A
NON-PARTISAN CONSENSUS. ACCORDING TO A LIBERAL PARTY MP, THE
GOVERNMENT AGREED TO THESE LIBERAL WISHES ON SOME SORT OF
EXPLICIT END DATE IN ORDER TO WIN A TWO-YEAR EXTENSION. THE
2011 DEADLINE MAY WELL STICK IN SOME FORM, BUT THE CF LIKELY
WILL NOT, IN PRACTICE, JOIN THE RANKS OF NATO'S CAVEATED
FORCES LIMITED TO SELF-DEFENSE. END SUMMARY.

CONSERVATIVES TABLE AFGHANISTAN PLAN

[1](#)2. (SBU) CANADA'S MINORITY CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT ON
FEBRUARY 8 TABLED A CONFIDENCE MOTION TO EXTEND THE CANADIAN
FORCES' (CF) MISSION IN REGIONAL COMMAND - SOUTH (RC-S),
AFGHANISTAN INDEFINITELY BEYOND FEBRUARY 2009. THE TEXT,
WHICH DREW FROM THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MANLEY REPORT
(REFTELS), NONETHELESS EXPLICITLY PROVIDES FOR A REVIEW OF
THE MISSION BY THE END OF 2011 TO ASSESS ONGOING PROGRESS
REGARDING BENCHMARKS AND TIMELINES, AND THE CONSERVATIVES
HAVE SAID PUBLICLY THEY BELIEVE THEY CAN ACCOMPLISH THE CF'S
MISSION BY THEN. AS THE MANLEY PANEL HAD ALSO RECOMMENDED,
THE GOVERNMENT'S MOTION ALSO MAKES THE EXTENSION DIRECTLY
CONTINGENT ON AN ADDITIONAL 1,000 TROOPS FROM OTHER NATO
MEMBERS, AS WELL AS THE SECURING OF HELICOPTERS AND UNMANNED
AERIAL VEHICLES (UAVS) DEDICATED TO THE CF IN KANDAHAR - OR
ELSE CANADA WOULD DEFINITELY PULL ITS TROOPS IN FEBRUARY
[1](#)2009. THE CONSERVATIVES CHARACTERIZED THE MOTION AS A

QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP AND AS A "CLEAR AND STRAIGHTFORWARD"
CHOICE TO STRENGTHEN THE MISSION OR ABANDON CANADAS
COMMITMENT TO ITS ALLIES, THE AFGHAN PEOPLE, AND THE WORLD.

LIBERALS RESPOND

13. (SBU) THE OPPOSITION LIBERAL PARTY ON FEBRUARY 12
PROPOSED SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENTS THAT VIRTUALLY RE-WROTE THE
GOVERNMENT MOTION IN ITS ENTIRETY. THE LIBERALS OUTLINED
CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THEY WOULD SUPPORT AN EXTENSION OF
CANADA'S MILITARY PRESENCE IN KANDAHAR THROUGH FEBRUARY 2011.
THE AMENDMENTS PROPOSE A NEW "DEFENSIVE-SECURITY ROLE" FOR
CANADIAN TROOPS AFTER FEBRUARY 2009 TO PROVIDE SECURITY FOR
RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT WORK, TO TRAIN THE AFGHAN
NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES SO THEY CAN INCREASINGLY TAKE
RESPONSIBILITY FOR KANDAHAR'S SECURITY, AND TO MAINTAIN
CANADA'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE KANDAHAR PROVINCIAL
RECONSTRUCTION TEAM. LIKE THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MANLEY
RECONSTRUCTION TEAM. LIKE THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MANLEY
PANEL, THEY INSIST ON ADDITIONAL TROOPS FROM NATO PARTNERS,
AND SUFFICIENT HELICOPTER LIFT CAPACITY AND UAVS IN PLACE
BEFORE FEBRUARY 2009. THEY WOULD ALSO SET THE TARGET FOR THE
END OF THE CANADIAN ROLE IN KANDAHAR AT FEBRUARY 1, 2011, TO
BE COMPLETE BY JULY 1, 2011. THEY CALLED FOR A "BETTER
BALANCE BETWEEN OUR MILITARY EFFORTS AND OUR DEVELOPMENT
EFFORTS" AND A GREATER FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT OF JUDICIAL AND
CORRECTIONAL SYSTEMS AND WATER SHORTAGES.

COMPROMISE IN SIGHT?

14. (SBU) IN PUBLIC COMMENTS ON FEBRUARY 12, AN EXCEPTIONALLY
CONCILIATORY CONSERVATIVE PM HARPER CALLED THE AMENDMENTS A
"POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT" THAT MOVED THE DEBATE "IN THE RIGHT
DIRECTION" AND EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE "GREATER

CLARITY" THAT THE LIBERAL PARTY HAD PROVIDED ON ITS POSITION
ON THE FUTURE OF THE AFGHAN MISSION. HARPER NOTED THAT THE
LIBERAL PROPOSALS BROUGHT THEM "VERY CLOSE" TO THE
GOVERNMENT'S POSITION. HE UNDERLINED THAT HE HAD SOUGHT THE
ADVICE OF THE MANLEY PANEL PRECISELY TO ACHIEVE A
NON-PARTISAN (OR BI-PARTISAN) CONSENSUS ON THE FUTURE OF THE
AFGHAN MISSION. LIBERAL LEADER STEPHANE DION PUBLICLY
INDICATED ROOM FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE
CONSERVATIVES OVER DEVELOPMENT, RECONSTRUCTION, TRAINING, AND
SECURITY GOALS TO MEET THE OBJECTIVES OF THE AFGHAN COMPACT.

CAVEATED CANADIANS TO "GO DUTCH"?

15. (C/NF) DURING A FEBRUARY 12 MEETING WITH POLOFF, LIBERAL
MP GLEN PEARSON (PLEASE PROTECT) CLAIMED THAT A "DEAL"
BETWEEN THE LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES ON AFGHANISTAN HAD
BEEN FINALIZED AT 6:30 A.M. THAT MORNING, AFTER A LONG NIGHT
OF NEGOTIATION. PEARSON SAID HE HAD SERVED AS A BACK-CHANNEL
BETWEEN DEFENSE MINISTER MACKAY AND LIBERAL PARTY DEPUTY
LEADER MICHAEL IGANTIEFF. MACKAY'S BOTTOM LINE, HE OBSERVED,
WAS THAT THE CONSERVATIVES COULD AGREE TO A 2011 END DATE IF
THE LIBERALS WOULD ACCEPT THAT CF TROOPS INVOLVED IN TRAINING
AND DEVELOPMENT COULD "SHOOT BACK." PEARSON SAID THE
AGREEMENT OVER RULES OF ENGAGEMENT WOULD BE FORMALIZED IN THE
NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS BY A SUB-AMENDMENT TO THE MOTION.

COMMENT

16. (C) THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT HAS LONG PROMISED NOT TO
"GO DUTCH" BY AGREEING TO AN ARBITRARY END DATE FOR THE CF
COMBAT MISSION IN KANDAHAR, AND HAS LONG CRITICIZED HARMFUL
CAVEATS, WHICH WOULD BENEFIT THE ENEMY, LET DOWN ALLIES, AND
TIE THE HANDS OF A FUTURE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER,
SINCE NEITHER THE CONSERVATIVES NOR THE LIBERALS PARTICULARLY
WANT TO FIGHT AN ELECTION ON THIS ISSUE, THE CONSERVATIVES
MAY WELL AGREE TO SOME SORT OF AN END DATE IN 2011 IN ORDER
TO CLOSE THE DEAL WITH THE LIBERALS - RECOGNIZING FULL WELL
THAT THIS CAN IN NO WAY BE FUNDAMENTALLY BINDING ON ANY

FUTURE GOVERNMENT OR PARLIAMENT. THE LIBERALS, WHILE STILL SEEKING AN END TO A "COMBAT MISSION," SEEM NOW PREPARED TO ACCEPT A SEMANTIC DIFFERENCE THAT HIGHLIGHTS DEVELOPMENT WHILE ADMITTING THE NEED TO MAINTAIN SECURITY - INCLUDING FIGHTING AS NECESSARY. THE NEXT DECISION FOR THE CONSERVATIVES IS WHETHER TO INSIST ON NEW SUB-AMENDMENT LANGUAGE THAT THE CF COULD INTERPRET AS AUTHORIZATION TO INITIATE COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS THROUGHOUT ITS DEPLOYMENT TO KANDAHAR, AT LEAST AS PART OF THEIR TRAINING AND COMBAT MENTORING OF AFGHAN NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES. THIS COULD BE A DEAL BREAKER FOR THE LIBERALS, HOWEVER, AND SO BOTH SIDES MAY VERY WELL LEAVE THE ISSUE PUBLICLY UNRESOLVED AND DELIBERATELY AMBIGUOUS, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. BOTH PARTIES CONTINUE TO DELIBERATE ON THE WISDOM OF FORCING A NEW FEDERAL ELECTION, BUT IT IS INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT THIS VOTE WILL NOT BE THE DIRECT TRIGGER. THE 2011 DEADLINE MAY WELL STICK IN SOME FORM, BUT THE CF LIKELY WILL NOT, IN PRACTICE, JOIN THE RANKS OF NATO'S CAVEATED FORCES LIMITED TO SELF-DEFENSE.

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WILKINS